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The Evangelization of the Heathen a Distinctive Work

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The Essence of Evangelization

THE essence of evangelization is to make known to those who are ignorant of it, the work accomplished for them by the atonement of Christ. This atonement has its peculiar worth in the kind of death Christ died in behalf of mankind. This death was more than mere mortal dying; it was a judgment-death. That is, it was a judicial death, necessitated by the relation of the divine government to sinners needing to be ransomed from the guilt and power of sin. Hence, it was something vastly more than, and intrinsically different from, mere martyrdom.

Bronson Alcott, the transcendental philosopher, at one time introduced into his boys' school in Boston a form of discipline which might be called judgment-infliction. For a certain transgression the master himself instead of the pupil was to receive the punishment. The first time it was applied, the culprit broke down, and the school broke down.

In principle, this gracious judgment-infliction was akin to that which under grace is employed in the atonement; and for a saving mastery over human nature the principle is unequalled.

The judgment-death of Jesus was a purely voluntary matter, costing the Father no less of sacrifice than it did the Son. Jesus "tasted (spiritual) death for every man." He thus dealt as the moral situation required with the vast issues involved, as between God and the sinner—issues which Satan as the personalized head of the realm of spiritual evil had occasioned. In so dealing, the judgment-death of Jesus, in principle, embraced every last moral reality that can enter into the final judgment. For example, he acknowledged and endured in his experience, the due judgment which attached to the sin-principle; he set at nought, cast out, and judged to its destruction, as unworthy of recognition in human life, the world-principle or self-principle, of which Satan is the author; he broke the bond between sin and death which the fall occasioned; and he brought in as a reversionary right and treasure, all mankind, potentially, to be his own.

In these important respects the death of Christ was a microcosm of the last judgement; it turns that judgement into a potential salvation, even a coronation day, for all mankind, if they can but know and avail themselves of its benefits. That judgement-death anticipated every moral issue that can cause dread to the human soul as it looks forward to the last day. The penal difficulty with respect to past sin was potentially met; sin can be pardoned. Satan, man's arch enemy, was potentially destroyed; the accuser will have no standing in that final court. The power of indwelling sin was potentially broken; we need not spiritually and finally die. And man, sinner though he is, is potentially the ransomed of the Lord. It is in anticipating and providing for all these things that the divine love has its peculiarity and preciousness. On the basis of such love, man, if penitent and believing, may cherish the certain hope of becoming ultimately a holy, as well as a redeemed being.

All this was in view when Jesus, facing his coming death, said, "Now is the judgement of this world; now shall the prince of this

world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all . . . unto myself." In this text we have the assertion that through the cross, all men are drawn into new, final, judgement-relations, because of certain values and implications in that cross. That cross, when its meaning shall stand revealed, will prove the touch-stone of all character and destiny.

The Heathen Destitute of this Microcosm

Now the heathen world, without revelation, is wholly destitute of the benefit of this great anticipatory judgement which took place in the soul of Christ. They have nothing (adequate) to prepare them for their final destiny; nothing except what may be derived from the poor hints which exist in their natural consciences, and that as fallen and perverted. That is better than nothing. God will not despise it; he will have regard to it, so far as it goes. In the last day, on the ground of the cross-enactment, such of the heathen as in their interior moral attitude before him have regarded their highest light, may be acquitted.

Ramke, one of the first two converts from the Garos in Assam, before he ever heard of

Christianity, seems to have been in this moral attitude. While all Ramke's people were devil worshipers, Ramke refused to propitiate evil spirits, stoutly asserting that there was one great, good spirit, far above all the evil spirits feared by his countrymen. Ramke worshipped him. Accordingly, when Dr. Bronson, the missionary, met him and preached the love of God in Christ, Ramke promptly accepted the gospel.

Said a heathen Chinese woman to her neighbor, as they heard a missionary describe the loving character of the Christian God, "Didn't I tell you that there *ought to be* a God like that?" Grant that these are exceptions to the great multitude, yet let us thank God that they exist. God only, who sees the heart, knows whether they be few or many. But even though the possibility of a sort of embryonic or infantine salvation exists for some, yet who would admit for a moment that this is sufficient for the heathen?

The Natural Conscience of the Heathen Insufficient.

Without the light of Christ's historic cross, the heathen certainly cannot be saved in any such assured, full and glorious way as God

desires, and as they need. They can have no certainty of salvation; almost universally they live under the tortures of superstitious fears; and they are without the converting, educating, transforming and sanctifying power of the first judgement in the cross. Then how woeful is their estate! The great thing the heathen need, in order that they may have a confident and "abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord," is the benefit of the great anticipatory judgment expressed in Christ's cross. Could they have this, as we do, in advance of the great day itself, they might lay hold of that which is both "the wisdom of God and the power of God." The denial of this, age after age, to the heathen, is their spiritual poverty and the Church's crime.

Thus our very possession of the knowledge that the death of Christ was a saving judgement-death, while the heathen are wholly without such knowledge, places the matter of giving it to them on an entirely distinctive plane of Christian enterprise, and constitutes a unique obligation. It is a work unlike in kind to the work of edification—confessedly secondary, however important — which is

carried on as between Christians, among themselves. Christendom has the advantage of the opportunity of meeting the judgment-day in advance of its arrival, while the heathen have not.

Evangelization as Distinguished from Rendering Evangelical

Real as is the duty in its place, to edify the Church and to extend it in all lands where it exists, yet the obligation to the heathen and to Christ, is that of *creating* the Church, of *giving existence* to it where now its existence is impossible. The duty in a Christian land is, so far as we may, to keep Christendom evangelical, it already having been evangelized; while the duty to heathen people is that of downright fundamental evangelizing, or in other words of giving them the benefit of that judgment which has already occurred at the center of the world's moral history, in Calvary's cross.

When, therefore it is said, as it often is, that "missions are missions, they are all one," the language is used in a confusing sense. "Missions" are not "missions" when the term "missions" is used in two senses, any more than a nursery is a university. Both

these are educational institutions, but their functions are widely different. So missions, in the sense of effotrs to introduce Christianity where it before was impossible, are a work standing upon a plane by itself; they are entirely *sui generis*. Missions which seek to edify churches already existing in communities which have long had the gospel are something different in kind; such missions also stand on their own distinctive plane. Doubtless both forms of work are obligatory, even reciprocal in their relations. It is, however, only just to the interest of truth, to the divine realities involved in the case, and to mission work itself of all kinds, that we use terms with accuracy; and that we discountenance the growing habit of obliterating distinctions which in the very nature of things exist, between different forms of Christian work. For these are distinctions which the Scriptures make and emphatically teach.

Missions of whatever kind, in so far as they are true, the product of the Spirit of God, are of course *one in spirit*; but they ought never to be represented as *one in kind*, or as serving the same functions. The tendency to class all forms of mission work alike as "one

work" overlooks the distinction above pointed out, and the result is to level down the higher forms of work to the grade of the lower. On the lower grounds the higher forms cannot flourish. The higher work is thus often obscured altogether.

Variant Planes of Mission Effort

Certain forms of effort, denominated "missions," are justified in popular appeal upon the ground that they are humane, prudential, philanthropic, self-preservative, etc., results in themselves good; but secondary when measured by the evangelical standard.

When missions, as thus understood, are syndicated and argued on these lower grounds of sentiment, however worthy the sentiment, the plea for them is practically removed from the distinctive Christain basis, the evangelical basis, to a confessedly lower plane. Of course corresponding harm then accrues to that form of work which derives its central motive and incitement from the anticipatory values in Christ's cross. So, also, corresponding dishonor, even though not intended, is done to Christ. God's sensitive point is the regard in which Christ's judgement-death is

held. This is the supreme reality; and affording, as it does, the chief reason for the evangelization of the heathen, no intelligent Christian can be indifferent to its suppression or obscuration.

The work of evangelizing pagans must always stand on a plane entirely distinct from the work of edification of others than pagans in evangelical aims and ideals. Moreover, this form of mission work is primary, elemental and foundational in Christianizing the world.

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